 Paper 1

When Barack Obama became the 44th president of the United States last year, his campaign was known for promising Americans, “change we could believe in”. Yet, after nearly a full year in office, what does he have to show for it? On his very first day in office, he told the world he was going to close the Guantanamo Bay Prison, best known for using torture to interrogate terrorists being held there.  According to Politifact.com, “This promise made its first appearance on Jan. 21, 2009, the day after Obama was sworn into office. The new president directed prosecutors to suspend legal proceedings against the suspected terrorists held at the Guantanamo Bay.”   The rest of the plan was to transfer all inmates at being held in the prison to American facilities. Has he done that yet? No. He said we would withdraw American soldiers from Iraq. Has that happened? No. In fact, the number of U.S. soldiers in Iraq has increased by 4,000, up to about 130,000 since 2008. He also promised us reform of our current healthcare system. While the new healthcare systems and all of its problems are starting to become a reality, it is also a very controversial issue, and nothing has been finalized. Another award Barack can put in his trophy case, however, is the Nobel Prize, awarded to him just over a week ago. According to Nobel Committee chairman Thorbjoern Jagland, "He got the prize because he has been able to change the international climate. Some people say, and I understand it, isn't it premature? Too early? Well, I'd say then that it could be too late to respond three years from now. It is now that we have the opportunity to respond - all of us” (Jagland, 2009). With that lack of concrete accomplishments in mind, isn’t giving Barack Obama the Nobel Prize a perfect example of mob mentality and just blending in with everyone else?

In Fahrenheit 451 Mrs. Bowles said “I voted last election, same as everyone, I laid it on the line for President Noble.  I think he is one of the nicest looking men to ever become President” (Bradbury 96).  Fahrenheit 451 can teach us a very valuable lesson.  The Nobel Peace Prize needs to be awarded based on actual accomplishments, not simply someone’s looks or the popularity of their name.

When Barack Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace prize, it was based on his “potential” and what he has the opportunity to do.  Isn’t that the same thing as giving a team the Superbowl before the regular season even starts?  The 2008 Detroit Lions drafted one of the most athletic wide receivers in the league with Calvin Johnson.  They also had a good coach looking to revive a struggling franchise.  If everything was based on potential, these 4-0 preseason lions should’ve been given the Superbowl trophy right then and there.  After showing all of their “potential” in the preseason, they became the first 0-16, winless team in NFL history.  Sure, anyone can look great on paper, but this award is about actually getting something done.  Are American presidents, including Barack Obama, the Detroit Lions of the world?  Would anything really have been lost if we had presented someone else the award this year, and gave it to Barack Obama two or even three years down the road; possibly after he had actually proves to the world what he is capable of doing?

If Barack Obama was the wrong choice, then who should we have chosen as the winner?  When asked the same question, Bridget Johnson of World News said, “Another fantastic choice for the Nobel Prize is [Father Nguyen Van Ly](http://www.freedom-now.org/father.php), who has been a tireless leader for democracy and free speech in Vietnam despite serving years behind bars for his efforts” (Johnson, 2009).  According to worldnews.com, voting for the prize ended on February 1st, 2009: only 12 days after Obama officially became the leader of the United States.  Compare those 12 days to almost 9 years that [Van Ly](http://www.freedom-now.org/father.php) has been dedicating everything he can to bringing free speech and democracy to Vietnam, two essential qualities of American life we take for granted on a daily basis.  Do we as American’s really put ourselves above the rest of the world that much?  Is 12 days here is worth almost a decade of hard work in the rest of the world?

The award only added to the pressure Barack Obama is under to be successful.  He seems to be the kid who got a brand new convertible for his 16th birthday.  Instead of waiting and proving what he can really do as a leader, his parents tossed him the keys to one of the most powerful countries in the world, and said, “Here you go, now don’t screw it up”.

At first look, most people will immediately dismiss the lessons in Fahrenheit 451, and say they don’t apply to our society today.  In reality, however, that couldn’t be farther from the truth.  America as a whole made a huge deal about Obama being the first African-American president, so couldn’t it be possible that a decent amount of voters only voted for him because of his race and popularity?  It is inevitable that every society is going to have their Fahrenheit moment, whether they realize it or not.  Is this our moment?